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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TUNA FISH TOPICS." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Today's report from the federal Food and Drug Administration is entitled "Tuna Fish Topics."

"I'm writing about canned tuna fish," writes our correspondent, "because just this morning while I breakfasted on toast and coffee and the morning paper, I saw an item stating that 'Tuna Fish Is A Favorite Dish in Washington, D. C.' A home economist on one of the daily papers has been holding a recipe contest, and has just awarded first prize to a Mrs. Fred Smith for 'Tuna Fish Roll Sublime,' made like a jelly roll, and served hot with a stuffed-olive sauce. The second prize was awarded for a molded tuna fish salad with a cucumber sauce.

"Now I know," continues our official correspondent, "that recipes aren't my province. My job is to tell you how the federal Food and Drug Administration protects your food and drug supply. And since I can't describe in detail a 'Tuna Fish Roll Sublime,' I'll describe tuna fish labels, and tell you how to buy this delicious canned seafood intelligently, so you'll know how much you're getting, and whether you're buying genuine tuna fish, or a fish that resembles tuna.

"As you probably know" -- (I'm still quoting) -- "our supply of canned tuna fish comes largely from the warm waters of the Pacific, off the coast of Central America and Mexico. Most of the fish are caught a thousand miles or so from the canneries, which are located in a very small territory in southern California. In the early days, all the tuna fishing was done off the coast of California, relatively close to the canneries at Long Beach, San Diego, and San Pedro. Tuna fish come up from southern waters in June or July, so all the fishermen had to do was to wait around until the fish arrived.

"But that was in the early days. After a while, more and more people wanted tuna fish salads, and sandwiches, and new dishes like 'Tuna Fish Roll Sublime,' and the tuna packers had to send their boats out to meet the fish half way.

"Canning has now become almost a year 'round job. The fishing boats go out prepared for a 30-day cruise; equipped with radios and Diesel engines, refrigerating plants and plenty of ice. Ice is very necessary on a fishing trip that may last from three to six weeks. As soon as the hold is full of tuna, the boats make full speed ahead for the canning plants. If the ice does not hold out, all the fish on board will be ruined.

"The second largest tuna pack recorded up to that time, nearly 2 million cases (there are 48 cans in a case) was in 1934. Last year's pack included well over 2 million cases, establishing a new record. Since the fish are caught so far away from shore, inspection at the cannery is very important. California maintains State inspectors, and their work is supplemented by that of the federal inspectors.

"Of course all tuna fish imported from Japan, Mexico, and Russia are subject to inspection by federal port authorities. A great deal of imported frozen tuna fish, for canning, enters the port of Los Angeles. One shipload, containing 80 tons of the frozen product, was never entered at the port because the shippers knew it contained unwholesome fish, and would be rejected by the authorities. The whole shipload of 80 tons was returned to Japan.

"Now, referring again to canned tuna fish, here are some practical items for Milady of the Market Basket. There are three distinct classes of market tuna: White-meat tuna, which is scarce and expensive; light-meat tuna, the standard market product; and Tonno, spelled T-o-n-n-o, the Italian-style pack. If you read the labels, you will find that the cans are generally marked as containing 13, 7, or 3 and one-half ounces of food. The Pure Food Law requires that the cans be as full of meat as practicable, with only enough oil and salt added to give a suitable flavor. (Tuna fish are always canned with a small amount of oil, usually cottonseed, and a small amount of salt.)

"Now let's go back to the three classes of tuna fish. The first includes the scarce and expensive white-meat tuna. Only one fish can properly be labeled 'White Meat Tuna,' and that is the Albacore.

"But, you may say, I've seen the words 'White Meat' on what I thought was canned tuna, and the fish wasn't tuna at all! You are right. But the label didn't say 'White Meat Tuna' unless the fish in the can was tuna fish. You will see labels reading 'White Meat Fish,' or 'White Meat of the Bonito,' or 'White Meat of Yellow-Tail.' When you see these labels, don't be misled into believing that you are getting white meat tuna. If it's not labeled tuna, it's not tuna.

"To comply with the Pure Food Law, a product labeled as tuna fish must be prepared from one of these four varieties of fish: the Albacore or Long Finned tuna; the Blue Fin or Leaping tuna; the Yellow Fin tuna, and the Striped tuna. Fish known as Bonito or Bonita, and Yellowtail or Amber fish, cannot be called tuna fish at all, but must be sold under their own names.

"The term Tuna and the term Tunny (T-u-n-n-y) mean the same thing. Tonno, as I said before, is used to describe a special Italian-style pack of tuna. The word Tonno on a label means that the fish in the can has been packed in olive oil, usually with more salt. This same thing is true if the product is labeled 'Italian-style tuna.'

"Now, to 'drive home the lesson,' as the teacher used to say, I'll repeat these important facts for consumers: Only genuine tuna can properly be labeled tuna. Read the label on the can, to know for sure what kind of fish you are buying, and how much the can holds. Cans are generally marked as containing 13, 7, or 3 and one-half ounces of fish. The Pure Food Law requires that the cases be as full of fish as practicable, with only enough oil and salt added to impart a suitable flavor."

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